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**County Scholarship Fund contribution towards students' access and retention in Public Secondary Schools in Vihiga County, Kenya**

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**Abstract**

This study aimed to evaluate the County Scholarship Fund's effectiveness in improving students' access and retention in public secondary schools in Vihiga County, Kenya. The research focused on the impact of the scholarship fund application and vetting process on student access and retention, the influence of scholarship fund allocation and disbursement on student access and retention, the contribution of education scholarship funds, the challenges faced by scholarship funds and strategies to enhance the current scholarship fund's impact on student access and retention. The study used a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative and qualitative methodologies, and included county fund managers, ward administrators, county director of education, principals, bursars, and class instructors as target audiences. Data was collected using a questionnaire and interview guide, and Cronbach's alpha was used to evaluate questionnaire reliability. The study also employed quantitative methods and inferential techniques to analyze the data. Additionally, it employed qualitative techniques to distill the data into themes, present it in a narrative format, and incorporate snippets of raw data. The study adhered to ethical considerations to prevent plagiarism, duly acknowledged all sources and information cited, and maintained a high level of integrity in the study. The study's findings revealed that the R<sup>2</sup> value for teachers was 0.581, while the R-value was 0.762. According to the R-squared value of 0.581, the screening procedure can account for approximately 58.1% of the variability in equitable student access and retention rates. Cash allocated and disbursed, as indicated by the coefficient of determination (R<sup>2</sup>) of 0.739, accounts for 73.9% of the variability in student equity access and retention rates. The regression model for principals had a strong level of accuracy, as indicated by an R<sup>2</sup> value of 0.739 (F = 116.139; P = 0.000 < 0.05). The study found the p-value (0.000) to be less than the crucial value (0.05), indicating that the association was statistically significant. The scholarship fund has enhanced student enrolment and bolstered retention rates in secondary schools. Nevertheless, there were deficiencies in the vetting procedure and insufficient finances to adequately support the recipients. Consequently, it is imperative to have efficient communication, openness, and accountability in the administration of funds. The study found that CSF had a beneficial impact on the fair and transparent vetting process, cash distribution, and disbursement, resulting in improved equal access and retention rates among secondary school students. The study suggests that it would be beneficial for the government to augment the financial resources allotted to counties while also emphasizing the necessity of improving efficiency and equity in the administration of the bursary fund.

**Key words:** County scholarship fund, access and retention, application and vetting process, openness and accountability and student enrolment

**County Scholarship Fund contribution towards students' access and retention in Public Secondary Schools in Vihiga County, Kenya**

By

Alex A. Chegenye, Shem Mwalw'a, S & Elizabeth Piliyesi

**I. Introduction and Background**

In today's world, most people agree that everyone has a fundamental right to education because it provides the cornerstone for establishing both peace and many forms of sustainable development (UNESCO, 2017). It is commonly accepted that funding for education is a necessary precondition for development to occur. The significance of providing equitable access to high-quality education in tackling socio-economic problems including poverty, unemployment, and inequality is well represented by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Reynolds et al., 2014; UNESCO, 2017). By 2030, every nation should have accomplished Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Goal 4: Providing inclusive and equitable quality education and encouraging opportunities for lifelong learning for all citizens. The socio-economic and demographic factors of children exert a significant influence on their access to excellent education and retention in schools, particularly at the post-primary levels. These factors have an impact on scholastic achievements and personal ambitions, as well as the personal and professional growth of underprivileged children, and the overall progress of the nation (Humble & Dixon, 2017).

Internationally, bursaries are anticipated to assist underprivileged children by ensuring their educational attainment (UNESCO 2015). This is achieved by providing financial resources to cover students' fees, hence facilitating their continued attendance rather than attrition. Bursaries and scholarships are necessary to mitigate educational disparities by providing financial assistance to individuals who are unable to afford school (Patrinos, 2011). In India, the local states are responsible for providing the remaining amount of the financing for Free Primary Education (FPE), with the national government providing 80% of the funds. Students who have graduated high school and have proven to have outstanding academic achievement are the only ones eligible (MOE 2012). In the UK, parents are exclusively in charge of making sure their children attend school; the government pays for education entirely up to the secondary school level (Young People Learning Agency, 2012). In order to successfully implement policies pertaining to school fees, the department of education works with school boards, parents, teachers, and other stakeholders, according to the Young People Learning Agency (2012). This collaborative effort aims to prevent children from being deprived of educational opportunities due to the genuine inability of their parents to afford the obligatory school fees.

The distribution of devolved funds in the African setting aimed to increase secondary education accessibility, especially in rural areas. Studies show that more than 70% of secondary school pupils in Malawi and Zambia qualify for bursary programs. According to the World Bank (2016), these initiatives are intended to pay 75% of recipients' tuition fees, with up to 100% covering for particularly vulnerable populations like double orphans. Even if the purpose of bursary plans is to increase the rates of student retention in public secondary schools. Some

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children drop out of school because of extremely high levels of poverty, which the system ignores by not providing things like uniforms and other basic needs. Keiichi and Wokadala (2014) noted notable increases in Uganda's completion rates. They did, however, also draw attention to the significant differences that occur at the secondary level, which is what the current study attempted to investigate.

In Kenya, devolution majorly revolves around County Governments. Despite the implementation of subsidized secondary school education in Kenya starting in 2008, the operational expenses of secondary schools have remained exorbitant. On average, boarding secondary schools come with a cost of Kshs. 44,000 per year, while day schools cost Kshs. 14,000 per year. Consequently, many Kenyans still find these fees unaffordable. In households with multiple children of secondary school age, the aspirations for education are shattered due to the inability to afford school fees, school uniforms, and food. This phenomenon has resulted in a higher level of educational advancement in urban regions compared to rural areas, as well as increased accessibility to school for children from wealthy households compared to those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, particularly those residing in deserts, rural areas, and urban slums (Ayodo, 2016).

In order to reduce educational waste, increase access and retention rates, and resolve imbalances and inequities in the secondary education system, the government implemented the secondary schools devolved county bursary plan. At 78%, the National Government-Constituency Development Fund (NG-CDF) provided funding for most of the secondary school bursary recipients. A considerable proportion of disadvantaged pupils attending public secondary schools did not benefit from the bursary distributing mechanism, according to a study by Mbayachi (2015). On the other hand, some students who were not deserving of the bursaries were able to profit from this program. The study also showed that disadvantaged students had trouble applying since they were not given timely access to public information. Furthermore, because so few students had previously learned about the requirements and application process, many were also confused about the application procedures. Drawing from the previously mentioned significant discoveries, it is apparent that the distribution of the Constituency Bursary Fund has given rise to a number of open questions concerning the poor and their access to school.

In order to fill these deficiencies, the Kenya constitution (2010) resulted in the creation of 47 counties throughout the nation. In 2013, the Transitional Authority of Kenya implemented devolved administration and established the County Bursary/Scholarship Fund. The County Scholarship Fund (CSF) was established by the Commission on Revenue Allocation in 2017 with the aim of enhancing the access, retention, and completion rates of secondary school for students from low socio-economic backgrounds. The enactment of the Vihiga County Education Scholarship Fund Act of 2014 aimed to enhance the functioning of the scholarship scheme. This legislation, passed by the County Assembly of Vihiga, established the County Bursary/Scholarship Fund. Its primary objectives were to provide guidance for the management, governance, and administration of the fund, as well as to address related matters. The present study examined whether this fund has effectively resolved the anomalies highlighted by other bursary/scholarship funds in facilitating the access of underprivileged and vulnerable students in Vihiga County to secondary education.

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Although scholarship funds have been allocated and distributed, Vihiga County has a secondary school level of education that is 20% lower than Kisumu county's 25% and Kakamega county's 22% (KNBS, 2013). Therefore, it is necessary to provide educational bursaries in order to improve access to secondary school education in the county. For example, in the 2014/2015 budget, the Uasin Gishu county government allocated Ksh.90 million for the County Education Bursary Fund, which aims to provide financial assistance to underprivileged and vulnerable children in Uasin Gishu County. In the 2014/15 financial year Siaya County allocated, Ksh. 49.8 million was allocated to assist 6,400 students in the county. In 2016, Kisumu County allocated a total of Ksh. 2 million as bursaries to all 35 county wards, as documented in the Kisumu County Records. Similarly, Vihiga County allocated Ksh. 125 million for bursaries to its 25 county wards, with each ward receiving 4.8 million shilling. This allocation aimed to provide financial assistance to 26,000 underprivileged students in the county, encompassing both secondary schools and vocational training colleges, as reported in the Vihiga County Records of 2015. The allocation of this bursary amount to students in vocational training institutions imposes additional strain on the economically disadvantaged secondary school students who are eligible to receive such assistance, have the opportunity to access, and successfully complete their education, as revealed by the present study.

Based on the aforementioned information, it is evident that Vihiga County exhibits the highest allocation of bursary funds towards facilitating the access of underprivileged and vulnerable children to secondary school education. Nevertheless, the allocation of cash is uniformly divided throughout all twenty-five county wards within the county, without taking into account the ward's level of need and its diverse population. Prominent issues pertain to insufficient financial resources, resulting in an inability to address the needs of all individuals in need, deficient administrative structures, and dubious criteria for allocation. Because of these deficiencies, the ability to reach and keep the intended students in school is limited.

The statistics from the county director of education's office shows that Vihiga County has not fully met the aforementioned commendable target, since there has been a decrease in the number of students accepted to secondary schools. The County Director of Education (2018) reports that the county's primary to secondary school transition rate is still relatively low at 60%, below the 100% national target. According to CIDP 2018–2022, the county's population increased to 637,877 in 2017 and was expected to reach 694,819 in 2022. With 1,033 people per square kilometre, the county has one of the highest population densities in the nation, higher above the national average of 66 people per km<sup>2</sup>. According to available data, Vihiga County has one of Kenya's highest poverty indices. One of the biggest barriers to improving access and completion rates has been identified as the poverty rate, which is estimated by the Vihiga County CIDP (2018–2022) to be 62%. Given the circumstances, it is unclear if the significant investments made by the Kenyan government and the Vihiga county administration in the education system—in particular, the secondary school education subsidies—are producing satisfying results. The purpose of the study was to evaluate how the county scholarship fund affected students' ability to enroll in and stay at Vihiga County's public secondary schools.

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## **II. Statement of the Problem**

The country is currently experiencing an on-going and enduring public outrage regarding the misappropriation and mishandling of devolved monies by many fund management bodies. The National Taxpayers Association (NTA), a lobby group, released a report in 2012 stating that over Kshs. 242 million shillings allocated to devolved units in the country was wasted. It was either unaccounted for or misused (NTA, 2012). Accountability of those entrusted to manage institutions in the country and especially county bursary funds may lead to efficiency in utilization of allocated funds; however poor utilization of such funds has been a significant concern. The study conducted by Oketch and Ngware (2012) highlighted the significant flaws in bursary allocation, specifically the unfairness of providing scholarships to students who did not deserve them. In their study, Ary, Irvine & Walker (2018) revealed that around 240 million bursaries intended for students from underprivileged groups remained unclaimed due to students' lack of awareness on the available opportunities. These two studies align with the findings of the Vihiga County Records Report, 2015, which recommended the equitable distribution of education money among all twenty-five county wards in the county, without taking into account the wards' specific needs and population sizes. These findings indicate that the impact of the county bursary fund on students' admission and persistence has not been experienced. The present study aimed to assess the impact of the county scholarship fund on improving students' access to and retention in public secondary schools in Vihiga, Kenya.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The foundation of this study was based on the Classical Liberal Theory of Equal Opportunity, as proposed by Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Horace Mann (1712-1778). The liberal theory posits that each individual possesses inherent potential and capacity that may be cultivated via the provision of opportunities. Education offers individuals the opportunity to cultivate and enhance their potential and abilities. In order to facilitate the cultivation of such potential, it is imperative that the education system be structured in a manner that eliminates external obstacles of any kind, thereby enabling individuals to actualize their innate skills and expedite their societal advancement. Horace Mann (1712-1778), a proponent of liberal progressivism, referred to education as "the great Equalizer" that would improve the opportunities of individuals born into disadvantaged backgrounds. The theory posits that every individual is inherently equal, and therefore, it is imperative for all social institutions within a given society to actively foster and uphold this principle of equality. This ideology primarily promotes civil rights within the framework of the rule of law, with a particular focus on economic freedom. The classical liberal perspective posits that society is merely a collective entity comprised of its individual constituents. Ensuring equitable access to education is a means of fostering social equality within society. The provision of Free Day Secondary Education funds (FDSE), bursaries, and teaching and learning materials by the Government of Kenya and its county governments aims to promote equitable access to education for all pupils in Kenya.

Education is the primary tool that can improve an individual's opportunities in life, even if they are born into modest circumstances. The notion posits that individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds have the opportunity to pursue higher education based on their individual merit, irrespective of their social-economic status. This ensures the establishment of optimal circumstances for the realization of the vision of equal opportunity, wherein individuals

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are provided with access to education that aligns with their inherent abilities. According to Petrat (1969), the criterion for scholastic promotion should encompass both talent and will. The implementation of a financial aid system is crucial in order to promote social mobility by fostering a competitive environment that enables those with the necessary abilities to enter occupations that align with their merits.

The classical liberal approach posits that the allocation of bursaries in secondary education can contribute to the reduction of educational wastage by promoting equity in access, retention in secondary schools, and facilitating a smoother transition towards a more promising future. There is an expectation that the inherent disadvantages associated with poverty, which contribute to educational underutilization, have been mitigated. At the educational policy level, the primary concern is the provision of grants for economically disadvantaged pupils at the secondary school level in Kenya (Njeru & Orodho, 2003). Alternatively, if education were provided without bursaries, only individuals with the financial means to cover school fees and associated expenses would be admitted and maintained in school. In such conditions, the perpetuation of inequities would contribute to the promotion of educational wastage within society. The Classical Liberal Theory was deemed relevant to this study because of the socio-economic disparities experienced by impoverished families, which result in their inability to pay the continuation of their children's education and subsequent premature withdrawal. The County Education Scholarships Fund (CESF) was implemented by the Government of Kenya through County autonomous units with the aim of providing equitable access to secondary education for all qualified secondary school students, irrespective of their socio-economic status (Republic of Kenya, 2013).

The socioeconomic differences that lower-income families face, which lead to their inability to pay for their children's continued education and eventual early withdrawal, made the Classical Liberal Theory relevant to this study. The Republic of Kenya (2013) states that the County Education Scholarships Fund (CESF) was established by the Kenyan government through county autonomous units with the goal of granting all eligible secondary school students equitable access to secondary education, regardless of their socioeconomic background. In line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989, this states that all children have the right to a free education that supports the full development of their unique personalities, skills, and abilities, this falls in line with its provisions. It is crucial to recognize that social advancement is not only dependent on education, even in spite of the classical theory's claim of equal possibilities, which holds that each person has innate ability and capacity for opportunities. This is demonstrated by the numerous examples of people from low-income families who have excelled in society despite not going to secondary school or leaving the regulated schooling system.

The theory's weaknesses reside in the proponents' belief that a free economy with limited government involvement is essential for equal opportunity (Golam, 2014). Critics have argued that the Classical Liberal Theory of Equal Opportunity has exhibited limited articulation about the complexities presented by multi-culturalism. The potential outcome is that the attainment of equal educational opportunities for cultural minorities may be undermined, as they are compelled to grapple with educational principles and methods that are culturally constrained, thereby reflecting solely the values and interests of the dominant social group (Kenneth, 2015).

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Nevertheless, there exist more fundamental reasons that could impede the progress of a free market, such as adverse weather circumstances. Hence, despite the efforts made by governments to foster equality across all regions, there exist underlying obstacles that may impede the development of regional equality (Lewin, 2008).

Nevertheless, without this limitation, the concept that best supports the foundation of this study is that public secondary schools are social institutions within the broader social framework, and hence should strive to ensure equal access to educational subsidies (Yatich, 2017). It has been observed that students are admitted to public secondary schools under the condition that they will get educational subsidies in an equitable manner, irrespective of their socio-economic status and gender. The nation of Kenya has implemented an education policy aimed at reducing educational inefficiencies by improving the accessibility, retention, completion, and attainment of high-quality education. Therefore, it is imperative for secondary schools, as a social institution, to demonstrate efficacy in the administration of educational subsidies and bursaries allocated to their students. The proficient administration of educational subsidies and bursaries ensures equitable access, retention, and successful completion of educational programs for students, irrespective of their socioeconomic status and gender.

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### III. Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework depicts a researcher's pictorial understanding of how research variables interact with each other (Pernecky, 2016) as summarized in Figure 2.

#### Independent variables

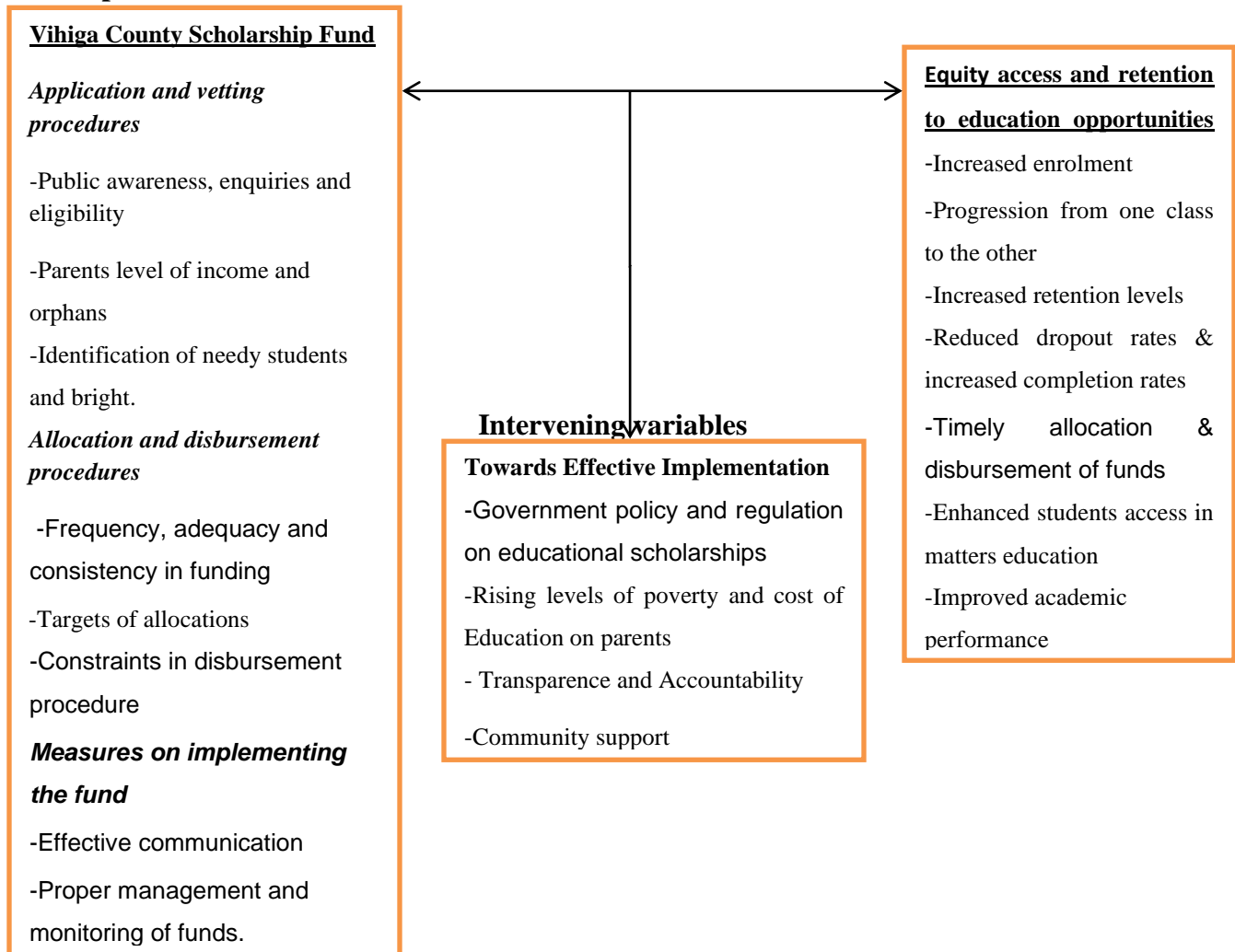


Figure 1 A framework of implementing the County Scholarship Fund (Source-Chegenye, 2021)



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### **Research Design and Methodology**

This study adopted a mixed research method, specifically a convergent parallel design. A Cross-sectional survey design (quantitative design) was useful in describing the characteristics of a large study sample, thus making the study results significant and the design also allowed the use of questionnaire on class teachers, principals and school bursars. Phenomenological (qualitative design) research design enabled the use of in-depth interview for the key informants who were selected from ward administrators, county fund manager and county director of education. The sample in the study was generated by both probability (simple random & stratified sampling) and non-probability (purposive & snowballing) sampling approaches. Reliability of quantitative instruments was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha technique and trustworthiness of qualitative instruments was determined by administering the instruments to a pilot sample and making adjustments and corrections on the items. The data underwent descriptive analysis, specifically utilizing frequency distribution to present percentages, means, and standard deviations. Additionally, inferential data analysis was conducted using the Pearson correlation coefficient and regression. Hypothesis testing was conducted using a significance threshold of 0.05. For qualitative data, the researcher transcribed, did a content analysis of the interview transcripts, checked lists to come up with codes, categories and themes and presented them in form of themes supported by raw data excerpts/quotes (Creswell 2014).

### **Findings of the Study**

The Section shows results and discussions on Education scholarship fund contribution towards access and retention rates in Vihiga County as responded by class teachers, school principals and school bursars through questionnaires distributed to them by the researcher and shown in Table 28.

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**Table 28: Teachers, principals and bursars responses on education scholarship fund contribution towards access and retention rates**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>PA</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>NS</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>St. D</b>
Scholarship fund has improved enrolment of students and increased retention in secondary schools	T	18(27.7)	45(69.2)	1(1.5)	1(1.5)	0(0.0)	1.769	0.552
	P	3(7.0)	26(60.5)	4(9.3)	7(16.3)	3(7.0)	2.558	1.075
	B	6(16.2)	25(67.6)	3(8.1)	2(5.4)	1(2.7)	2.108	0.842
There is an increase in number of student's enrolment in boarding schools than in day schools	T	7(10.8)	25(38.5)	16(24.6)	16(24.6)	1(1.5)	2.676	1.017
	P	2(4.7)	17(39.5)	13(30.2)	8(18.6)	3(7.0)	2.837	1.021
	B	2(5.4)	14(37.8)	8(21.6)	11(29.7)	2(5.4)	2.918	1.064
Parents meet their obligation of providing for their children on hidden costs	T	4(6.2)	17(26.2)	21(32.3)	17(26.2)	6(9.2)	3.061	1.073
	P	0(0.0)	8(18.6)	12(27.9)	18(41.9)	5(11.6)	3.465	0.934
	B	3(8.1)	11(29.7)	13(35.1)	9(24.3)	1(2.7)	2.837	0.986
Increased scholarship fund allocation enhances progress towards universal access to secondary education	T	24(36.9)	29(44.6)	6(9.2)	6(9.2)	0(0.0)	1.907	0.913
	P	3(7.0)	26(60.5)	8(18.6)	3(7.0)	3(7.0)	2.465	0.984
	B	5(13.5)	26(70.3)	5(13.5)	0(0.0)	1(2.7)	2.081	0.721
Those who join Form one complete Form 4 schooling successfully	T	5(7.7)	21(32.3)	18(27.7)	20(30.8)	1(1.5)	2.861	0.998
	P	0(0.0)	21(48.8)	4(9.3)	15(34.9)	3(7.0)	3.000	1.069
	B	2(5.4)	23(62.2)	5(13.5)	3(8.1)	4(10.8)	2.567	1.093
Few students drop out of school due to fees balance	T	7(10.8)	34(52.3)	10(15.4)	7(10.8)	7(10.8)	2.584	1.157
	P	2(4.7)	18(41.9)	7(16.3)	15(34.9)	1(2.3)	2.883	1.028
	B	4(10.8)	19(51.4)	3(8.1)	10(27.0)	1(2.7)	2.594	1.091
The bursary fund have increased student completion rates in their secondary education	T	12(18.5)	33(50.8)	16(24.6)	4(6.2)	0(0.0)	2.184	0.808
	P	0(0.0)	30(69.8)	8(18.6)	3(7.0)	2(4.7)	2.465	0.826
	B	6(16.2)	27(73.0)	3(8.1)	0(0.0)	1(2.7)	2.000	0.707
The bursary fund has improved academic performance in schools	T	11(16.9)	30(46.2)	15(23.1)	9(13.8)	0(0.0)	2.338	0.923
	P	0(0.0)	18(41.9)	9(20.9)	13(30.2)	3(7.0)	3.023	1.011
	B	5(13.5)	18(48.6)	9(24.3)	4(10.8)	1(2.7)	2.405	0.956
The scholarship fund reduces disparities and inequality in provision of secondary education	T	11(16.9)	34(52.3)	10(15.4)	9(13.8)	1(1.5)	2.307	0.967
	P	0(0.0)	21(48.8)	12(27.9)	8(18.6)	2(4.7)	2.790	0.914
	B	4(10.8)	21(56.8)	5(13.5)	6(16.2)	1(2.7)	2.432	0.987
Bursary monies improve on the teaching and learning process in secondary schools	T	9(13.8)	41(63.1)	7(10.8)	6(9.2)	2(3.1)	2.246	0.919
	P	1(2.3)	23(53.5)	8(18.6)	6(14.0)	5(11.6)	2.790	1.103
	B	4(10.8)	23(62.2)	2(5.4)	7(18.9)	1(2.7)	2.405	1.012

**Source: Field data (2022) \*Key: T=Class Teachers n=65; P=Principals n=43 and B=School Bursars n=43**

When asked to give their views on whether scholarship fund has improved enrolment of students and increased retention in secondary schools, 69.2% of teachers agreed and 27.7% strongly agreed with 1.5% of them not sure while 1.5% disagreed to the statement. Majority of class teachers 96.9% were in agreement that scholarship fund has improved enrolment of students and increased retention in secondary schools. From the data collected from principals, 60.5% agreed

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and 7.0% strongly agreed with 9.3% of them not sure while 16.3% disagreed and 7.0% strongly disagreed to the statement that scholarship fund has improved enrolment of students and increased retention in secondary schools. Majority of school principals 67.5% were in agreement that scholarship fund has improved enrolment of students and increased retention in secondary schools. For school bursars 67.6% agreed and 16.2% strongly agreed with 8.1% of them not sure while 5.4% disagreed and 2.7% strongly disagreed to the statement that scholarship fund has improved enrolment of students and increased retention in secondary schools. Majority of school bursars 84.3% were in agreement that scholarship fund has improved enrolment of students and increased retention in secondary schools. The statement that scholarship fund has improved enrolment of students and increased retention in secondary schools, had the following means (1.769 for class teachers, 2.558 for principals and 2.108 for school bursars), an indication of low agreement levels to the statement by class teachers and school bursars of 1.769 and 2.108 respectively, however the principals had moderate agreement levels to the statement of 2.558; with standard deviation of 0.552 for class teachers, 1.075 for principals and 0.842 for school bursars. In open ended questionnaire one of teachers indicated that:

Most needy learners now go to school and get education like others; few students drop out of school as compared to before; enhances regular school attendance among students and facilitates students from poor background to further education. Education scholarship fund has greatly reduced absenteeism and it has enabled needy students to complete their studies (Teacher 15).

The finding agrees with Oketch, Sika & Gogo, (2019), study that indicated SCEBF allocation had a unique significant contribution to access to secondary education ( $\beta=.564$ ,  $p=.000$ ). The findings further show that enrolment changed at about 31.8% due to funding allocation in the county. The study recommended that there is need to increase allocation of bursary fund to enhance access to secondary education in the county.

The finding shows that 24.6% of teachers disagreed and 1.5% strongly disagreed with 24.6% of them not sure while 38.5% agreed and 10.8% strongly agreed to the statement that there is an increase in number of student's enrolment in boarding schools than in day schools. Slightly above average of class teachers 50.7% were in disagreement or not sure that there is an increase in number of student's enrolment in boarding schools than in day schools. From the data collected from principals, 18.6% disagreed and 7.0% strongly disagreed with 30.2% of them not sure while 39.5% agreed and 4.7% strongly agreed to the statement that there is an increase in number of student's enrolment in boarding schools than in day schools. Most of principals 55.6% were in disagreement or not sure that there is an increase in number of student's enrolment in boarding schools than in day schools. For school bursars 29.7% disagreed and 5.4% strongly disagreed with 21.6% of them not sure while 37.8% agreed and 5.4% strongly agreed to the statement that there is an increase in number of student's enrolment in boarding schools than in day schools. Most of school bursars 56.7% were in disagreement or not sure that there is an increase in number of student's enrolment in boarding schools than in day schools. The statement that there is an increase in number of student's enrolment in boarding schools than in day schools, had the following means (2.676 for class teachers, 2.837 for principals and 2.918 for

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school bursars), an indication of moderate disagreement levels to the statement by class teachers, principals and school bursars of 2.676, 2.837 and 2.918 respectively; with standard deviation of 1.017 for class teachers, 1.021 for principals and 1.064 for school bursars. Tsisiga (2018) revealed that there was a steady rise in the average number of students enrolled in form one in boarding schools as compared to those who enrolled in day schools. Moreover, the study established that a significant positive relationship exists between subsidized school funding and completion rates. The study recommends that an increase in the funds allocated towards subsidizing secondary school education would significantly improve students' participation.

The findings in table 28 show that 26.2% of teachers disagreed and 9.2% strongly disagreed with 32.3% of them not sure while 26.2% agreed and 6.2% strongly agreed to the statement that parents meet their obligation of providing for their children on hidden costs. Majority of class teachers 67.7% were in disagreement or not sure that parents meet their obligation of providing for their children on hidden costs. From the data collected from principals, 41.9% disagreed and 11.6% strongly disagreed with 27.9% of them not sure while 18.6% agreed to the statement that parents meet their obligation of providing for their children on hidden costs. Slightly above average of school principals 53.5% were in disagreement that parents meet their obligations of providing for their children on hidden costs. For school bursars 24.3% disagreed and 2.7% strongly disagreed with 35.1% of them not sure while 29.7% agreed and 8.1% strongly agreed to the statement that parents meet their obligation of providing for their children on hidden costs. Most of school bursars 62.1% were in disagreement or not sure that parents meet their obligation of providing for their children on hidden costs. The statement that parents meet their obligation of providing for their children on hidden costs, had the following means (3.061 for class teachers, 3.465 for principals and 2.837 for school bursars), an indication of moderate disagreement levels to the statement by school bursars of 2.837 however, class teachers and principals indicated high disagreement levels to the statement of 3.061 and 3.465 respectively; with standard deviation of 1.073 for class teachers, 0.934 for principals and 0.986 for school bursars. The findings contradict with Kinaro (2015) study that revealed there is a high enrolment rate into secondary schools which is not consistency to reflect in completion rates due to a number of other factors. The study further revealed that school funds are a major challenge as the research found out because parents are still expected to meet educational costs in spite of the subsidized education by free day secondary education by the government.

Besides, table 28 indicates that 44.6% of teachers agreed and 36.9% strongly agreed with 9.2% of them not sure while 9.2% disagreed to the statement that increased scholarship fund allocation enhances progress towards universal access to secondary education. Majority of class teachers 81.5% were in agreement that increased scholarship fund allocation enhances progress towards universal access to secondary education. From the data collected from principals, 60.5% agreed and 7.0% strongly agreed with 18.6% of them not sure while 7.0% disagreed and 7.0% strongly disagreed to the statement that increased scholarship fund allocation enhances progress towards universal access to secondary education. Majority of school principals 67.5% were in agreement that increased scholarship fund allocation enhances progress towards universal access to secondary education. For school bursars 70.3% agreed and 13.5% strongly agreed with 13.5% of them not sure while 2.7% strongly disagreed to the statement that increased scholarship fund allocation enhances progress towards universal access to secondary

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education. Majority of school bursars 83.8% were in agreement that increased scholarship fund allocation enhances progress towards universal access to secondary education. The statement that increased scholarship fund allocation enhances progress towards universal access to secondary education, had the following means (1.907 for class teachers, 2.465 for principals and 2.081 for school bursars), an indication of low agreement levels to the statement by class teachers, school principals and school bursars of 1.907, 2.465 and 2.081 respectively; with standard deviation of 0.913 for class teachers, 0.984 for principals and 0.721 for school bursars. The results are in line with Duflo, Dupas and Kremer, (2019), study that the scholarship covered the full tuition and fees for a day student for four years paid directly to the school, Students who received the scholarship were responsible for the cost of school materials, transportation and feeding costs. Scholarship winners were 26 percentage points more likely to complete secondary school, obtained 1.26 more years of secondary education. Their learning also improved, scoring an average of 0.15 standard deviations greater on a reading and math's test.

The results show that 30.8% of teachers disagreed and 1.5% strongly disagreed with 27.7% of them not sure while 32.3% agreed and 7.7% strongly agreed to the statement that those who join Form one complete Form 4 schooling successfully. Most of class teachers 60.0% were in disagreement or not sure that those who join Form one complete Form 4 schooling successfully. From the data collected from principals, 34.9% disagreed and 7.0% strongly disagreed with 9.3% of them not sure while 48.8% agreed to the statement that those who join Form one complete Form 4 schooling successfully. Slightly above average of principals 51.2% were in disagreement or not sure that those who join Form one complete Form 4 schooling successfully. For school bursars 62.2% agreed and 5.4% strongly agreed with 13.5% of them not sure while 8.1% disagreed and 10.8% strongly disagreed to the statement that those who join Form one complete Form 4 schooling successfully. Most of school bursars 67.6% were in agreement that those who join form one complete form 4 schooling successfully. The statement that those who join Form one complete Form 4 schooling successfully, had the following means (2.861 for class teachers, 3.000 for principals and 2.567 for school bursars), an indication of moderate disagreement levels to the statement by school teachers of 2.861, high disagreement levels to the statement by school principals of 3.000 and moderate agreement levels to the statement of 2.567 by school bursars; with standard deviation of 0.998 for class teachers, 1.069 for principals and 1.093 for school bursars. Regarding open ended questionnaire school bursars said that:

Public awareness and transparency should be enhanced in identifying the needy and deserving cases; involve principals in decisions making; use village leaders who know student's best and functional data based should be kept. Use head teachers as agents to increase efficiency in allocation of funds; have proper legislations and allocation be done after proper investigations on the grassroots.

The findings agree with Mbayah, Odebero and Ndiku (2018) study that there was a steady rise in the average number of students enrolled in form one in public boarding schools as compared to those who enrolled in day schools, which registered a lacklustre trend. On the basis of these findings, it was recommended that the government of Kenya sensitizes parents on the need to

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enrol their children in day schools, so as not to overwhelm the already overstretched facilities in public boarding secondary schools.

Additionally, table 28 indicates that 52.3% of teachers agreed and 10.8% strongly agreed with 15.4% of them not sure while 10.8% disagreed and 10.8% strongly disagreed to the statement that few students' drop out of school due to fees balance. Most of class teachers 63.1% were in agreement that few students' drop out of school due to fees balance. From the data collected from principals, 34.9% disagreed and 2.3% strongly disagreed with 16.3% of them not sure while 41.9% agreed and 4.7% strongly agreed to the statement that few students' drop out of school due to fees balance. Slightly above average of principals 53.5 % were in disagreement or not sure that few students drop out of school due to fees balance. For school bursars 51.4% agreed and 10.8% strongly agreed with 8.1% of them not sure while 27.0% disagreed and 2.7% strongly disagreed to the statement that few students' drop out of school due to fees balance. Most of school bursars 62.2% were in agreement that few students drop out of school due to fees balance. The statement that few students drop out of school due to fees balance, had the following means (2.584 for class teachers, 2.883 for principals and 2.594 for school bursars), an indication of moderate agreement levels to the statement by class teachers and school bursars of 2.584 and 2.594 respectively, however the principals had moderate disagreement levels of 2.883; with standard deviation of 1.157 for class teachers, 1.028 for principals and 1.091 for school bursars. The findings concur with Nzuki (2018), study that the CDF had contributed significantly to the improvement of enrolment with the establishment of new day schools that are more affordable, hence making secondary school education less costly and thus more available to low-income families. The study's findings also showed that student dropout had declined with both the CDF and FSEP. The positive social change implications of this study are that it provides evidence for advocacy among policy makers for increased allocation of resources to the education sector through the CDF and FSEP. Increased allocations will contribute to Kenya's progress toward universal access to secondary education.

The findings show that 50.8% of teachers agreed and 18.5% strongly agreed with 24.6% of them not sure while 9.2% disagreed to the statement that the bursary fund has increased student completion rates in their secondary education. Majority of class teachers 69.3% were in agreement that the bursary fund has increased student completion rates in their secondary education. From the data collected from principals, 69.8% agreed with 18.6% of them not sure while 7.0% disagreed and 4.7% strongly disagreed to the statement that the bursary fund has increased student completion rates in their secondary education. Majority of principals 69.8% were in agreement that the bursary fund has increased student completion rates in their secondary education. For school bursars 73.0% agreed and 16.2% strongly agreed with 8.1% of them not sure while 2.7% strongly disagreed to the statement that the bursary fund has increased student completion rates in their secondary education. Majority of school bursars 89.2% were in agreement that the bursary fund has increased student completion rates in their secondary education. The statement that the bursary fund has increased student completion rates in their secondary education, had the following means (2.184 for class teachers, 2.465 for principals and 2.000 for school bursars), an indication of low agreement levels to the statement by class teachers, principals and school bursars; with standard deviation of 0.808 for class teachers, 0.826

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for principals and 0.707 for school bursars. In the interview with the project manager had this to say:

County government bursary is very effective only that there is need to enhance the kitty to cater for most students in need. It pays full fees (100000) per student per year for one fifth of the students who get 370 marks and above; many needy families appreciate and the learners remain in school (Male Fund Project Manager, 4<sup>th</sup> June, 2022)

The findings concur with Muthoki (2015), study that provision of government bursaries has led to high retention rates; consequently, leading to high students' completion rates. However, Keiichi and Wokadala (2014) noted that in Uganda there were noticeable increases in completion rates; but with wide disparities at secondary level.

The results indicates that 46.2% of teachers agreed and 16.9% strongly agreed with 23.1% of them not sure while 13.8% disagreed to the statement that the bursary fund has improved academic performance in schools. Most of class teachers 63.1% were in agreement that the bursary fund has improved academic performance in schools. From the data collected from principals, 30.2% disagreed and 7.0% strongly disagreed with 20.9% of them not sure while 41.9% agreed to the statement that the bursary fund has improved academic performance in schools. Most of principals 58.1% were in disagreement or not sure that the bursary fund has improved academic performance in schools. For school bursars 48.6% agreed and 13.5% strongly agreed with 24.3% of them not sure while 10.8% disagreed and 2.7% strongly disagreed to the statement that the bursary fund has improved academic performance in schools. Most of school bursars 62.1% were in agreement that the bursary fund has improved academic performance in schools. The statement that the bursary fund has improved academic performance in schools, had the following means (2.338 for class teachers, 3.023 for principals and 2.405 for school bursars), an indication of low agreement levels to the statement by class teachers and school bursars of 2.338 and 2.405 respectively; however, principals had high disagreement levels to the statement of 3.023; with standard deviation of 0.923 for class teachers, 1.011 for principals and 0.956 for school bursars.

The findings indicates that 52.3% of teachers agreed and 16.9% strongly agreed with 15.4% of them not sure while 13.8% disagreed and 1.5% strongly disagreed to the statement that the scholarship fund reduces disparities and inequality in provision of secondary education. Most of class teachers 69.2% were in agreement that the scholarship fund reduces disparities and inequality in provision of secondary education. From the data collected from principals, 18.6% disagreed and 4.7% strongly disagreed with 27.9% of them not sure while 48.8% agreed to the statement that the scholarship fund reduces disparities and inequality in provision of secondary education. Slightly above average of principals 51.2% were in disagreement or not sure that the scholarship fund reduces disparities and inequality in provision of secondary education. For school bursars 56.8% agreed and 10.8% strongly agreed with 13.5% of them not sure while 16.2% disagreed and 2.7% strongly disagreed to the statement that the scholarship fund reduces disparities and inequality in provision of secondary education. Most of school bursars 62.1% were in agreement that the scholarship fund reduces disparities and inequality in provision of

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secondary education. The statement that the scholarship fund reduces disparities and inequality in provision of secondary education, had the following means (2.307 for class teachers, 2.790 for principals and 2.432 for school bursars), an indication of low agreement levels to the statement by class teachers and school bursars of 2.307 and 2.432 respectively; however school principals had moderate disagreement levels to the statement of 2.790; with standard deviation of 0.967 for class teachers, 0.914 for principals and 0.987 for school bursars.

Lastly, table 28 indicates that 63.1% of teachers agreed and 13.8% strongly agreed with 10.8% of them not sure while 9.2% disagreed and 3.1% strongly disagreed to the statement that bursary monies improve on the teaching and learning process in secondary schools. Majority of class teachers 76.9% were in agreement that bursary monies improve on the teaching and learning process in secondary schools. From the data collected from principals, 53.5% agreed and 2.3% strongly agreed with 18.6% of them not sure while 14.0% disagreed and 11.6% strongly disagreed to the statement that bursary monies improve on the teaching and learning process in secondary schools. Most of principals 55.8% were in agreement that bursary monies improve on the teaching and learning process in secondary schools. For school bursars 62.2% agreed and 10.8% strongly agreed with 5.4% of them not sure while 18.9 disagreed and 2.7% strongly disagreed to the statement that bursary monies improve on the teaching and learning process in secondary schools. Majority of school bursars 73.0% were in agreement that bursary monies improve on the teaching and learning process in secondary schools. The statement that bursary monies improve on the teaching and learning process in secondary schools, had the following means (2.246 for class teachers, 2.790 for school principals and 2.405 for school bursars), an indication of low agreement levels to the statement by class teachers and school bursars of 2.246 and 2.405 respectively; however principals had moderate agreement levels to the statement of 2.790; with standard deviation of 0.919 for class teachers, 1.103 for principals and 1.012 for school bursars. The result concur with Mueni, Kimiti & Mulwa (2019), study that timely supply of curriculum support materials to public secondary schools was significantly related to the quality of curriculum implementation process in public secondary schools in Makeni County.

## **Conclusion**

The primary objective of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the Vihiga County Scholarship Fund to enhance student access and retention rates within public secondary schools located in Vihiga County, Kenya. The education scholarship fund has had a beneficial impact on the rates of access and retention. The implementation of this initiative has improved student admission and retention rates in secondary schools, leading to a decrease in the number of students who withdraw from school due to unpaid tuition. Furthermore, the establishment of the bursary fund has resulted in notable advancements in student completion rates within the realm of secondary education, bolstered academic achievements within educational institutions, and mitigated gaps and inequities in the delivery of secondary education.

## **Recommendations**

The study's results and conclusions led to the formulation of the following recommendations aimed at boosting the evaluation of the County Scholarship Fund in terms of its impact on



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improving student access and retention in public secondary schools in Vihiga County, Kenya: According to the study, in order to guarantee that all eligible students receive the bursary, the county government should evaluate the standards for allocating the county government scholarship fund. In addition, teachers should be honest with high levels of integrity when giving names of students who are orphaned, needy and vulnerable towards bursary application and vetting procedures. Also, students should fill bursary forms with utmost honesty and trustworthy to warrant the monies for their studies in school.

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